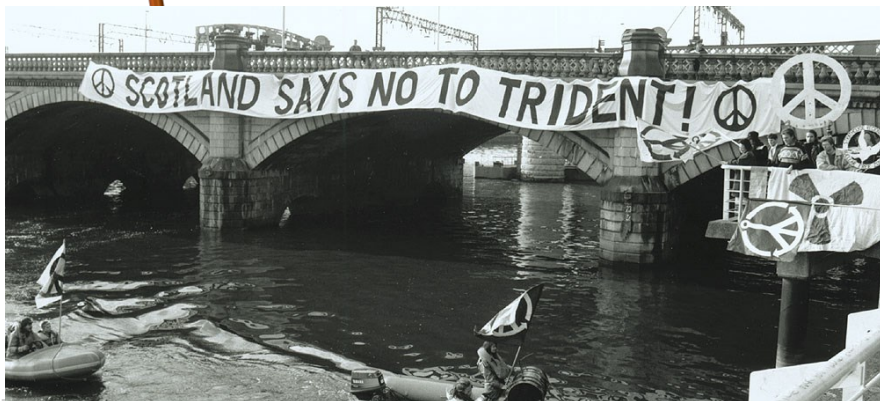




Socialist Labour

No. 3 February 2016, donations 50p



Socialist Labour - Who We Are

Socialist Labour is a new bulletin issued by a wide range of Labour Party socialists and trade union militants who want to see the working-class take power in society and create a socialist Britain and world. We welcome any socialists to our discussion groups and open editorial board. If you would like to join the discussion group or find out more about Socialist Labour contact:

Facebook: [Socialist Labour](#)

Twitter: [@SocialistLab1](#)

Text/phone: 07866 616 492 07792 966 910

P+P SL PO Box 59188, London, NW2 9LJ

No To Trident, No to NATO!

By Terri Johns, Croydon North Labour Party

THE LABOUR SHADOW Cabinet reshuffle is a step forward for the whole movement, albeit a gradualist one that leaves Hilary 'Friend of Israel' Benn, able to promote internally and no doubt externally, his neo-liberal support for the war on terror and for US imperialism.

We must never forget that Benn fully supported the disastrous killing of the Iraq war by Blair and Bush and has never apologised. His disgraceful Tory cheering speech in December which besmirched the working-class volunteers who fought Franco in Spain by linking them to oil-chasing US/UK bombing of Syria, will remain a stain on the Labour Party until he is removed from his position.

The gains of removing Michael Dugher and Pat Mc Fadden, representatives of a 'right wing conservative' clique in the Party are major gains but it is the shifting of Maria Eagle from her position as Shadow Defence Secretary and her replacement by Emily Thornberry, a known opponent of Trident, that has created a third senior Labour figure with views that directly clash with the preferred foreign and defence policies of the US and UK ruling-class. This is unprecedented in the British Labour Party since 1945.

Of course Jeremy Corbyn still approaches world politics from a pacifist and social chauvinist position, in which the interests of 'the defence of Britain' are put before the international interests of the entire working-class. This can be seen in the reliance placed by him on that bunch of imperialist thieves, the United Nations. Nevertheless the challenge to the world order represented by the Trident debate is a fundamental one.

The Labour defence review led by Thornberry and Ken Livingstone must be conducted quickly to enable a clear policy position on Trident to be voted by the Party membership prior to the Commons vote on renewal this year.

As activists we must ensure that the issue of potential job losses in the war industry are clearly answered and we must campaign in the GMB and UNITE to prevent a block on a Party decision from our union leaderships.

Trident maintenance is estimated to be £100 billion over the length of the proposed renewal and these are funds that should be used for social investment. There is no identifiable threat that Trident will deter and we must build the No Trident demonstration on 27 February to the largest in living memory.

Jeremy Corbyn, despite a strong and committed record in Stop The War and peace campaigns over many years, clings to a concept of 'British national defence' that weakens his argument against Trident.

It's worth remembering the words of the Communist Manifesto penned by Karl Marx:

"The communists are distinguished from the other working-class parties by this: that in the national struggles of the proletarians of the different countries, they point out and bring to the front, the common interests of the entire proletariat, independently of all nationality."

Socialist Labour will look to support opposition to Trident and NATO and seek to debate a clear international position for the Labour Party in the interests of the working-class of the world.

NATO: Imperialism under the guise of defence

By John Newsham Bradford East Labour Party

THE HISTORY OF NATO is one of imperialism under the guise of defence. Established in 1949, purportedly to uphold the safety of member states in the face of Soviet aggression, sources from the time tell a different story. President Eisenhower was clear from the start that there was no perceived military threat from the USSR. The role of NATO, according to him, was simply to “convey a feeling of confidence...politically, in opposition to Communist inroads”.

NATO did not officially carry out any military operations until the end of the Cold War, and is now popularly represented as having been the deterrent against all-out war. In reality, member states simply relied on each other to support common, covert objectives in poorer, weaker parts of the world. In one of many such examples kept classified for years, as long ago as 1957 the US and its allies were attempting covert regime change in Syria. Wikipedia reports:

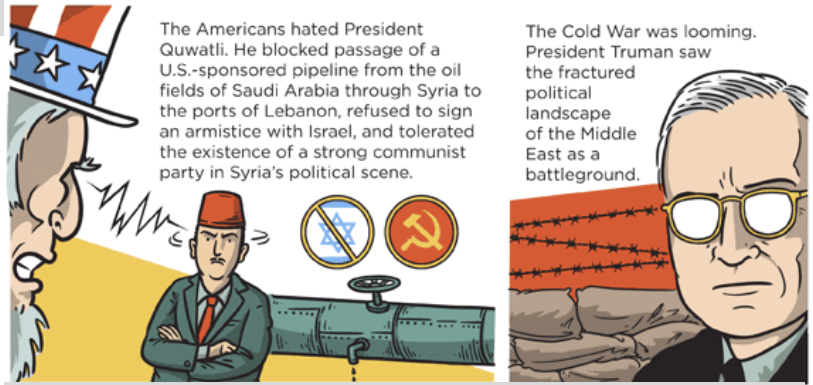
“Explicit documents from September 1957 reveal a plot, including collaboration with the British intelligence service MI6 in a plot to assassinate three Syrian officials in Damascus. These targets were: Abdel Hamid al-Sarraj, head of military intelligence; Afif al-Bizri, army chief of staff; and Khalid Bakdash, leader of the Syrian Communist Party—all figures who had gained politically from exposure of “the American plot” (in 1956). Details about this conspiracy were revealed by a ‘Working Group Report’ uncovered in 2003 among the papers of British Defence Minister Duncan Sandys.”

Spurred on by Syria’s neutral stance, this US attempt to overthrow the government in the country was intercepted, eventually driving Syria to ally itself with the Soviets. This discrete action was carried out after Eisenhower declared as the primary objective of US foreign policy to help the “enslaved... resist the oppressor until his hold can be gradually weakened and loosened from within.” Such justifications for western action are very familiar today.

After the fall of the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe NATO should, according to its own stated aims, have become redundant. Instead, with the US realising it could now be used to support its foreign policy goals unopposed, the role of NATO was quickly re-classified. Continuing to operate and indeed expand after the collapse of its reason for existing, NATO effectively admitted that its previous forty years were built upon deception. As Noam Chomsky wrote, “the end of the Cold War brings its problems... new enemies have to be invented”.

Throughout the nineties, NATO began to present itself as the moral policeman of the former Soviet Union. Following its UN backed presence to help end the appalling atrocities of the Bosnian war, the global military dominance of NATO members was dressed up in a cloak of good intentions, and left to go unchallenged.

In 1999, knowing its actions would be vetoed by Russia and China, NATO bypassed the UN Security Council to bomb Yu-



From the CIA-backed coup of 1949 to today NATO and the USA have organised coups and wars in Syria. NATO is indeed an imperialist attack dog.

goslavia, a fellow UN state. This was widely represented in the west as having been a crusade in pursuit of peace. In reality the networks in place for a potential peaceful solution were not pursued, NATO members preferring to exert their military muscle. How would the west have responded had the Cold War ended differently, with the Soviet Union acting this way around the world?

Today, NATO accounts for 70% of the world’s total spending on the military. Unsurprisingly, it is the US which makes up the largest share, having invested \$582 billion (£400 billion) in 2014. Yet it is Britain which holds the second largest share, having spent \$55 billion (£36 billion) in the same year. Has that money really made us safer?

Article 5 of NATO, which compels all member states to support an attacked country in taking military action, has been required just once; in response to the attacks of September 11th. As recent history has shown, the nature of the enemy in the modern day is such as to render the subsequent NATO action costly and counter-productive. Terrorist attacks have happened again; the countries imperialism spent billions on invading had little connection to the attackers.

If September 11th prompted an attack on Afghanistan with the justification of finding a Saudi who was hiding in Pakistan, more recent justification for Britain’s bombing of Syria was retaliation for the actions of French and Belgian terrorists in Paris. Clearly the old Cold War propaganda machine is working its magic in the 21st century.

How else could NATO member states lull their populations into spending billions attacking some of the poorest and militarily weakest nations on earth? It is no coincidence that these nations were also amongst the Cold War targets of the USA.

So what does this mean for Britain in 2016? A country in the midst of a decade of austerity continues to spend billions on an outdated alliance whilst there is no state on earth providing a realistic threat to us. The nature of any potential attackers to the UK today- small factions of extremists, many using western militarism as a justification for their actions- is such that any international military alliance is likely to only prove counter-productive. NATO, like trident, is an expensive and outdated relic of the previous century.

Unions in Turmoil: The GMB and Unison Gen Sec elections face legal challenges over alleged malpractices

By Keith Henderson Clacton Labour Party and GMB union

TWO OF THE THREE biggest unions in the country have recently held elections for the post of General Secretary. Unison Britain's biggest union with 1.3 million members saw the re-election of Dave Prentis who has held the post since 2001 and the GMB Britain's third biggest union elected Tim Roache their Yorkshire regional secretary.

The question is asked what is unusual about this as part of the democratic running and operation of our national trade unions. The fact is that these two elections are startling in the comparison that can be made between them for two crucial factors. The low level of member participation in both elections leading to incredibly low turnouts and the fact that both elections have been questioned essentially for the part played by both bureaucracies to maintain their position over the membership.

For Unison only 9% of the members voted in the election; this itself represents a collapse of 38% from the already small 14.6% turnout in 2010. The GMB figures for voting turnout are even more startling. The GMB issued 610,023 ballot papers out of which only 26,658 members returned their ballot paper meaning that the GMB turnout of 4.4% set possibly an all-time low for engagement in a union General Secretary election. Tim Roache, the winning candidate, got 15,034 votes meaning Tim obtained a mighty 2.46% endorsement of the unions' membership, some mandate!

The bureaucratic centralism of the GMB leaders, and particularly under the most recent leadership of Sir Paul Kenny, has led to a mass alienation of almost the entire membership. This is the same for Unison with the strangulation of activism and genuine democracy under Prentis over the last 14 years, although there is a little more room for air within Unison than the GMB. As can be shown by the fact that two rank and file activists were able to get on the ballot paper.

In the GMB this is simply not permitted under the election rules designed by the bureaucracy, voted through by a hand-picked compliant executive and operated and implemented by the officer caste and the compliant regional committees.

The GMB operates its General Secretary election far removed from democratic considerations. The bye laws as laid out permit without any chance a lay member from getting on the ballot paper. I was dismissed as a union officer and am currently fighting a long running battle for unfair dismissal. I put myself forward for nomination for the General Secretary position as early as February 2015. I pledged to stand on an agreed and thorough democratic socialist manifesto.

I received only one nomination, that of my own branch, as a result of which the Branch President and Secretary have been removed from office and banned for three years. Their crime? Noncompliance with an instruction by the Regional Secretary to withdraw a newsletter simply notifying their branch the date of the meeting and that I had declared that I was seeking nomination.



GMB's Paul Kenny and UNISON's Dave Prentis; legal challenges alleging electoral malpractice.

The GMB by-laws preclude a lay member from contacting other Branch Secretaries informing them that they would like to be nominated for the position of General Secretary and Treasurer of the union.

You are absolutely prohibited from writing that down in any document, email or twitter. This publication would be seen as a breach of the byelaws. However, not for the bureaucracy or their supporters who engaged in social media and other publications including *The Morning Star* throughout the election period in clear breach of the byelaws. I have submitted a complaint to the Certification Officer and the case will be heard in the spring. This represents an important staging post in the campaign for democracy within the GMB.

Similarly the Unison election has been plagued with the heavy hand of the bureaucracy, potentially Prentis himself, taking actions that would ensure the re-election of Prentis and thus maintain the control from a top. This is not just hearsay but there is an audio tape that a whistle blower has put in the public domain. It is a recording of a meeting of regional officers in London led by the Regional Secretary Linda Perks. As the website Libcom explains: "In it she directs Unison employees to assist the election campaign of Dave Prentis, and also explains how officials can sabotage the election campaigns of the rank-and-file candidates." (<https://libcom.org/blog/unison-paid-officials-caught-sabotaging-leadership-election-08122015>). Perks also thanked the staff for their work and effort in getting Prentis his nominations.

Unison activists have launched a campaign to have the election investigated. Yet the bureaucracy with all their arrogance went ahead and declared the election result anyways.

Karen Reisman, an NEC member said, "How can the union declare an election result when an investigation into it is still ongoing?" A third of the NEC have signed an open letter demanding Prentis's suspension alongside the London Regional management team. Only London has been caught out this practice is clearly rife throughout Unison.

Socialist Labour calls on all socialists and trade unionists to give their full support to their comrades in Unison and the GMB both struggling for trade union democracy. Without democratic member led trade unions the struggle for socialist policies and workplace justice will be always strangled by the bureaucratic agents of capitalism in these cases Prentis and Kenny.

LABOUR PARTY—More Boldness Comrades !

Graham Durham, Brent Central Labour Party

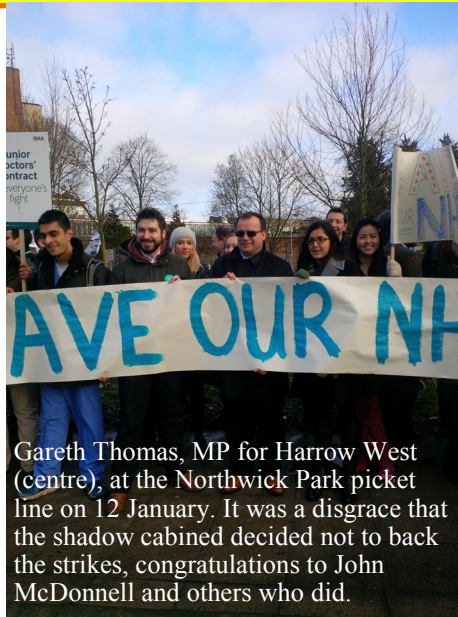
AS I WRITE THIS piece the fifth of the resignations by minor Labour figures from a 'right-wing clique' has been announced with the now customary resignation interview on the BBC. This stretching of the minor reshuffle by Jeremy Corbyn into extra days of resignations is designed by Progress and other Blairites to prevent the anti-austerity, anti-imperialist war message being accessible through the media. As Socialist Labour predicted in September 2015, this is a key strategy of the neo-liberals in the Party to seek to destabilise Corbyn and force him out.

Despite the Oldham by-election dealing this strategy a fatal short term blow it has not stopped the Blairites, however they are now in a much weaker position.

In this context with the huge mandate Jeremy has in the Party, it is now a critical time for Labour to rally and take bold steps to strengthen our hold on the Party and develop our socialist policy.

Firstly the process of reinstating the 'between Conference' decision making role of the party through the National Executive Committee must be accelerated. The PLP has secured far too much freedom to dictate policy and we need to ensure it once more becomes accountable to the Party bodies. There is not a single current Labour MP who would be in Parliament if they had not had the support of the Party and its members. Accordingly we must insist at every level that Labour MPs follow the policy decisions of the NEC until Conference establishes clear policy. Alongside this a system for polling Labour Party members could play an advisory role to the NEC.

Secondly we must take a clear stand that Labour stands alongside all workers struggling against austerity. Just as Labour Party banners featured in the Stop The War pro-



Gareth Thomas, MP for Harrow West (centre), at the Northwick Park picket line on 12 January. It was a disgrace that the shadow cabinet decided not to back the strikes, congratulations to John McDonnell and others who did.

tests in November and December so the Labour leadership and national Party organisation should be mobilising for protests such as the student nurse bursaries and the junior doctors as well as TfL and other transport actions.

Thirdly, as we approach the annual Council budget setting round, the devastating cuts required by the Tories should be resisted in every Labour Council. This means not just building local campaigns against cuts but ensuring Labour Councillors are instructed to vote against cuts. It is a feeble argument that if Labour does not vote for cuts, the Tories will get someone else to do it. On this basis Labour was wrong to campaign

against tax credit cuts as George Osborne would simply impose them somewhere else.

The fact is resistance by Councils would publicise the service cuts and sackings the Tories want and build resistance. In this respect the letter to Council leaders issued by Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell on 17 December is a mistake that needs reversing, for right-wing councillors are interpreting it as an open signal to implement Tory cuts.

Finally, the co-ordination of local struggles through Momentum groups must be built up and co-ordinated nationally. Some Momentum groups are doing a great job locally, in other areas they seem moribund or non-existent. What is needed is a democratic structure in which comrades determined to build Momentum nationally and locally as a democratic anti-austerity force can stand for election.

Only a few Labour MPs joined the doctor's picket lines on 12 January. It was a disgrace that the shadow cabinet decided not to back the strikes, congratulations to John McDonnell and others who did.

We have the numbers in the Party and in the wider struggles, it is vital to make this count now.



#StopTrident national demonstration
Saturday 27 February 2016
Assemble at 12 noon
Central London meeting point
March to Trafalgar Square

Organised by: [CND](#) »
[Facebook](#) » [Transport to London](#) »

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), supported by Stop the War Coalition, is calling a national demonstration to protest against Britain's nuclear weapons system: Trident.

Join us to say No to government plans to buy a new system at a cost of £100 billion. Parliament will be voting on this in 2016. So this is urgent – we can't delay.

The majority of the British people, including the Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn and other parliamentary party leaders, oppose nuclear weapons. They are weapons of mass destruction that can kill millions. They don't keep us safe and they divert resources from essential spending.

Let's get message out loud and clear: we don't want Trident and we don't want a new Trident.

Join us in London on February 27th to say: **Stop Trident!**